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ABSTRACT

Presented are guidelines to help teachers effectively identify and educate gifted students from urban environments. It is said that the one consistent criteria that teachers may use to identify gifted students is the depth to which students respond to environmental items (recall of street signs or types of automobiles found on the block and analysis of community affairs). Teachers observations and peer evaluation are also thought to be useful means of identifying gifted children. It is recommended that strategies for motivating gifted children include helping the child plan his occupational goal, finding individuals in the community who could assist teachers in developing their student's occupational model, developing communications with parents, and providing concrete experiences that allow students to explore their talents and discover their potential. Teachers are encouraged to create an environment in which community situations are the basis for learning and to develop students' leadership potential, especially at junior and senior high school levels. Educational trends such as the following are identified and commended: emphasis on early identification of talents, abolition of grade placements as presently conceived, experiences which allow divergent as well as convergent thinking, and use of systems analysis in planning students' programs. (GW)

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GIFTED DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN

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The expression "We have found the enemy and it is us," can find no more appropriate home than we educators who continue to give lip service to change, and return to business as usual as soon as the consultant, teacher trainer or workshop has ended. This paper does not intend to introduce new fads or simple answers to four hundred years of complicated problems, only some alternatives. If the teacher or student who reads this finds one idea that will in some small way light a candle in the hearts and minds of urban disadvantaged children who daily are exposed to the trauma of attending a school that in no way resembles the world the urban child must return to each d y, then this task has not been in vain.

What is needed at this time are some alternative methods to the discovery and cultivation of the talents that we know exist among children whose experiences have been limited to an eight to ten block radius, in many cases, of an urban community.

Watson, in the forward of Reissman's book, *The Culturally Deprived Child* brings us to the heart of this paper when he states "In the current flurry of concern over the gifted, most well-to-do families are pleased to think of their own children as being given well deserved special consideration. Teachers are gratified because higher standards are in vogue. Yet, the great reservoir of undiscovered and undeveloped intellectual talent in America is not in the upper-class or upper middle-class neighborhoods. While the proportion of high I. Q's may be lower in underprivileged areas - this is a 'slippery' question as Professor Reissman demonstrates - "the actual number of intellectually very bright children in poor homes is far in excess of those to be found in the relatively few homes of business and professional leaders."

It is not my concern that we know this talent exists, but that we continue to waste talented young people who could provide the badly needed leadership in our urban communities and within this country. Who are these children? How do we identify them? How can I, in a real world situation in which I have thirty to thirty-five physically active young people, light at least one candle? To these questions I have no absolute answers but some alternatives.

For so many years, the Gifted Child has been determined strictly by cognitive methods of evaluation. Terman's studies are an example of gifted being a very narrow concept in which the primary goal was to measure within the realm of occupational hierarchy. If you were fortunate enough to be high on the professional scale, you were labelled successful. Other contributors to the field in recent years such as Robert Havinghurst have developed other definitions of Gifted that lend flexibility to an already over defined term. For the sake of defining giftedness within this paper, Havinghurst's definition will be used to identify gifted disadvantaged children. "We shall consider any child Gifted who is superior in some ability that can make him an outstanding contributor to the welfare of and quality of living in society."

We hear more and more reports of successful people from depressed areas who somehow had their talents developed against odds. William Moore, President of Seattle Central Community College likes to recall that his first grade teacher predicted - to his face – that he would never complete high school. H. L. Erth, Director of the Human Development Center of the University of Toronto and developer of electronic methods for brain study was placed in a class for the mentally retarded when he went to school.

The terms or labels used by Havinghurst in defining Gifted shall apply as definitions in the remainder of this paper with a few exceptions, which shall be explained later. The term "first order gifted" shall apply to the extremely gifted child, or the student in the upper one percent of his class. The remaining children in the upper nine percent in a given ability may be considered "second order gifted." It must be remembered that we are now dealing with the top ten percent of the class.

The student who happens to fall in the one percent category in any community whether urban or suburban and void of economics, is in no way hard to spot. He will stand

out like a new coin. In a disadvantaged school he more than likely will excel in traditional as well as environmental methods of testing. He will be able to discern differences and recognize similarities better than his peers, synthesize and generalize better, or he may do these things in an average way and have outstanding ability in music, mathematics or art. Or he may be gifted at moving a group toward a worthy goal, leadership.

The "second order gifted" children may be less easy to recognize in an urban disadvantaged school, especially in traditional methods of testing. But the parameters of the classroom may also be too confining to produce some very creative and challenging moments for this population.

The term Gifted will be used to identify those students who through traditional as well as environmental testing, score well above the average on cognitive, affective, and psychomotor tests. Students who demonstrate a single talent in one specialized area shall be designated "talented." Students who do not fall within the upper ten percent of their respective classes and who demonstrate in applied performance, exceptional ability, shall be designated "high potential." This topic will be developed further in the techniques and procedures section of this paper.

Screening of students from limited educational backgrounds is not a task that can be taken lightly. Traditional methods of testing may be highly predictable in surfacing "first order gifted" students but teachers may find themselves confused in attempting to evaluate "second order gifted" students with traditional methods of testing. Teachers who screen urban children with traditional methods of testing and who find themselves quoting scores that in no way measure up to traditional levels of giftedness are asked to read much of the present research on the subject. Allison Davis, *Social Class Influence Upon Learning;* A. Harrard, *Social Status and Intelligence;* and Ralph W. Tyler, *Can Intelligence Tests be Used to Predict Educability* are a few references.

Measurement of urban disadvantaged students with traditional methods of testing by the classroom teacher should be done with a very well defined understanding of the parameters and limitations that this method of testing brings to the classroom. From Hartford, Connecticut to San Diego, California, I have listened to teachers ask why we have to allow these tests to be given, or that the test scores in no way include experiences our children bring to the testing situation, only to hear responses that allude to the fact that federal program guidelines specify that in order to be funded, or refunded, we must show test scores.

Holding children responsible for tests that are in no way standardized or sensitive to the needs of urban students of limited educational background is wrong. But to continue testing consciously aware of satisfying federal guidelines, or any other motive, except to interpret the test for the betterment of the child, is to justify testing for the wrong reasons, which is criminal.

It is suggested that traditional as well as "teacher developed" methods of evaluating urban disadvantaged students be developed as screening instruments. Teachers are encouraged to develop environmental methods of testing as screening instruments. Environmental or culture specific testing is to utilize the radius of the child's community as the contents of a screening instrument. Teachers are encouraged to use street signs within an eight to ten block radius of the school to measure recall. An example of this procedure is presented at the end of this paper. After looking over my material, other creative methods can be developed by the classroom teacher. For the evaluation of higher levels of learning no child can manipulate objects or words if his vocabulary is limited or lacking certain basic skills. Often urban children will find themselves caught between double meanings within the same word. The word "together," or "cool" in an urban community will have a completely different set of meanings than traditional definitions of the same term. The words "go to" or "is to"; cat is to tiger as dog is to lion, bear, camel etc. will also cause problems. An analogy such as this can be very frustrating to a youngster who may relate to the above terms in physical definitions instead of the process of cognitively manipulating the items.

Teachers and psychometrists in developing items within the radius of the community in their screening process, allow the student an opportunity to not have to spend fifty percent of their time unravelling a world of words he or she has neither been exposed to or can be motivated in any way to be exposed to in the future.

Environmental testing *can* be accomplished by the teacher or a para-professional. Often the para-professional knows the community and can bring a teacher many items from within the community that can be used to make up the contents of the environmental test. Teachers concerned about how to structure such a test can borrow the structure of traditional tests using environmental content. In standardizing such an instrument the urban teacher or psychometrist should use the instrument only to rank each individual classroom. Teachers should make no attempt at this time to generalize or interpret his or her classroom results with any other group but the population tested. In an unpublished dissertation (Stallings, 1970) a first attempt is now being made to standardize an environmental testing instrument. Urban students in Hartford, Connecticut were tested on an instrument in which the contents of the test were derived directly from the radius of the urban child's community. Street signs, churches, barbershops, store fronts, etc., were used to measure recall. A second community in San Diego, California is now being field tested to determine if it is possible to develop an instrument especially for students from limited urban backgrounds in which the contents of the exam are taken directly from the child's immediate community. It is hoped that a school psychometrist will be able, in the near future, to isolate those items in an urban community that have a high rate of reoccurrence. The important task again is to free the child from exposure to items that he or she has never before been exposed, and to allow the individual to concentrate on the task of recall or manipulation within abstract thinking.

Teachers are asked to use the two methods just discussed as well as traditional methods, such as those found within all school districts. My methods, the environmental and two others, teacher observation, which is visual, and peer evaluation which may be gathered by class feedback in the form of a socio-gram are useful ways of identifying gifted children. These procedures are recommended in making final evaluations as to student eligibility.

In evaluating each classroom, classify your students along the definitions mentioned earlier. No two classroom scores are to be compared. Each classroom is to be ranked only against itself. (Taking into account that the school is grouped homogeneously in classrooms) students in the top one percent who evolve from this method of screening should be labelled upper level gifted. The remaining nine percent may be considered second order gifted. Those students demonstrating high potential and who score below ten percent in one specialized area may be labelled talented. The real sleeper even now, as many teachers know, may not surface and may demonstrate in physically applied performance exceptional ability within the group. This is the most difficult individual for teachers or screening methods to identify. Unfortunately, we have more labels for this individual than answers - aggressive, slow, remedial, overactive or just bad. Often the best evaluation of this youngster is later found to be inaccurate. How many of you as teachers have been told five or ten years later that child X is now a member of state college in a highly specialized field.

The one consistent criteria teachers may use in determining gifted students is the depth to which students are able to respond to environmental items. Students asked to recall street signs or types of automobiles found on the block, when allowed to move deeper into the subject, will often show exceptional ability in giving details about items that happened on that street. An example could be an automobile and a high amount of details such as wire wheels or color, etc. The number of responses to an item should be considered important in evaluating student performance. Students should receive strong approval for recalling a street name. But, students who can list any number of details that relate to a certain item are to be considered very able in their ability to remember information. For evaluating higher levels of thinking, teachers are encouraged to use the contents of the community in evaluating students cognitive or intellectual abilities. No student can manipulate or generate abstract reasoning without the proper information to begin the task. Allowing students to work with familiar or meaningful materials will enhance the gifted students ability in abstract reasoning.

The above items will give teachers effective tools in identifying gifted children. More than likely, students in the first step or the upper levels of gifted may be evaluated through consistency in applied performance, and time, which is the ultimate evaluator. Usually students in this area are above average in all areas and superior in most. Often this population will show unusual abilities in special areas and average to above average ability in other pursuits.

Teachers who find themselves bewildered in observing that the class leader in social relationships ranked in the lower third of his class academically, seldom question the fact that only eighty percent of school learning is within the cognitive domain. The remaining 10 percent affective, and ten percent psychomotor usually happen outside of the classroom. I once listened to a counselor in a heated meeting with the school administration explain that we have excelled beyond our wildest dreams in developing the cognitive process but failed miserably in developing within our students some sense of "Who am I?" and "What is my relationship to this world?" There is no doubt that a proper blend of the cognitive as well as the affective domains needs to be equally explored in developing good education within urban schools. A strong cognitive curriculum based on information developed outside of a disadvantaged child's background does very little in preparing him for an affective and psychomotor world waiting just outside the classroom door. Teachers should remain sensitive to the fact that 70 percent of the children within their urban classrooms now will return to their community to lead productive lives. The 30 percent who will go on to college and professional careers will in some cases leave the urban community and return only in a professional role. This statement raises some serious questions for the urban teacher. Do we prepare curriculums for the 70 percent to become responsible citizens within their communities or do we concentrate our energies on the ten percent who will probably live outside of the urban community?

Dewey once added "it is well to 'do good' to others, but it is much better to do this by securing for them the freedom which makes it possible for them to get along in a future without such altruism from others." Dewey's statement closely approximates the importance of motivation. We in education know that the product of motivation is independence. Urban teachers are well aware of how difficult it is in some cases to motivate a child who has been exposed to few models that offer an opportunity to observe the student when his exceptional abilities are operating at their maximum. Teachers will often observe that although students can verbally identify a number of highly specialized professional roles, in many cases the student's definition of what that individual's role is may be far removed from the correct definition. Often having students define or report on how to develop the necessary skills to reach their occupational goal will provide teachers a first clue in developing strategies of how to best motivate that child. It should be noted that there is no cookbook recipe to motivate gifted children. Each child is different and unique in himself. The urban teacher should develop a few important areas that will provide valuable information in developing strategies for motivating gifted children.

Phase I might be assisting the child in planning his occupational goal. Valuable input may be injected by the teacher into the child's plans of obtaining his objective. During this phase the teacher should be especially sensitive

to the fact that allowing the child to develop realistic and attainable goals will develop self motivation. Also during this phase developing a strong interpersonal relationship of trust and confidence with the student might make the teacher's opinion a major reinforcer in motivating future behavior.

Phase II is to determine if within the community there is an individual within the home or the immediate area that could assist teachers in developing their student's occupational model. Teachers will find parents keenly interested in their children receiving a good education and going on to college; but like their children, lacking in basic information of how to best achieve their objective. We know that children learn a great deal by unconscious imitation of people. We also know that the urban child's model or the person in the student's life may be far removed from their occupational choice. Often in urban communities the child's model may well range from the community businessmen to the pimps and hustlers of the street. A common conflict for the urban child is to realize the benefits of planning a career (which in many cases takes years) when a community hustler obtains instant success in a matter of weeks. Teachers have no difficulty determining which model or role is best in the long run. But a young man or woman whose whole life is centered around the "here and now" will definitely be in deep conflict as to which of the two occupations will contribute most to himself and his community.

Phase III needs teachers who can effectively start early communications with parents of gifted children. These teachers will find that their efforts will pay handsome future dividends in motivating the child to maximize his individual potential. This conversation should emphasize the child's vocational choice, but of much more importance, it should help parents to understand how their own attitudes and relationships with their children affect the child's motivation. Providing parents with types of games and materials that would hold the child's interest are valuable keys to maintaining high motivation. Tips on college scholarship and grant opportunities are valuable. Whenever possible the teacher should meet individually with the parents and allow them an opportunity to learn techniques in good learning procedures. Often teachers are the only professional model the child is exposed to and the initial contact between the teacher and child may be the only stimulus in the community to assist him in developing his desired potential.

Phase IV, the last step, is probably the simplest, but must be handled with extreme care. Urban disadvantaged children will often have a different measurement as to what is the criteria for success. Teachers often find themselves dismayed at students low regard for achievement scores as measures of success in urban communities. Educators are encouraged to let their students know that they have one or more talents; not by quoting achievement scores but by providing students with the opportunity to know and explore their talents and discover for themselves the extent of their potential. A clear standard of excellence is needed as a model for all areas of study. The child needs to know a well written paper when he sees one and he needs to be rewarded for attaining this goal.

Motivation for an urban disadvantaged child can be compared to an elusive butterfly. Teachers really have no way of determining how effective their work has been until long after the student has departed from the class. Short term motivation is easy to observe. Usually the child is observed actively engrossed in an assigned activity, but that lasting spark cannot be measured until long after the student has departed.

Ward states in *Educating the Gifted*, that "The values upheld and the skills and understanding taught through the community should reflect the needs of the society of which the school is a part." Taba and Elkin concluded that unlocking the hidden potential of these students requires a radical change in curriculum and teaching on all levels. Both the materials and methods of teaching need to be aligned with the psychological realities of culturally disadvantaged children. Although the learning processes of the culturally disadvantaged do not differ essentially from learning processes in general, the techniques for generating these processes do. Thus, while children in general learn better when the contents of the curriculum are *geared to their own experiences* as a point of departure, work with culturally disadvantaged youngsters suggests that this is a *sine qua non* if any motivation is to be generated.

Gearing curriculum to the society in which the school is a part is a task well suited for any urban teacher. But to *use* the contents of an urban community to motivate and challenge the gifted students of your classroom is the purpose of this section. It is no accident that some of our best writing is now coming from within prison walls. If you have not read some of the readings by prison authors, I highly recommend that you do so. Many of these men were non-readers or slow learners in their early education. Urban teachers must realize that we are in a new consciousness that is surfacing within Mexican, Puerto Rican, Afro and other minority Americans within urban communities. This reality must be coped with by those professional educators who feel that the new cultural, political and economic awareness among minorities is a passing fad. Urban educators who are saving the old techniques until after the so-called fad passes may find themselves, in five years, outside the school doors peering in. If you are within the parameters of the teacher just discussed, put this paper down and justify yourself by stating "I'd rather fight than switch."

In describing techniques best suited for urban gifted children I am defining more a process than a product. This is not to say that I am not interested in the product. The process is beyond grades or symbols or being best suited for junior high or secondary school. Thanks to Glasser's *Schools Without Failure*, we are one written step closer to resolving that conflict. What I am attempting to describe is the creation of a learning environment that uses as its primary goal the radius of the community as a basis for learning. At this point let me define the term "basis for

learning." All learning within the school must be planned and implemented within the radius of the community, and later broadened to other communities, and then extended to the world itself. An example of this technique in action could be in the teaching of math. Allowing students to start a unit or assigned study at the corner grocery allows each individual an opportunity to apply principles of math to an activity he or she will confront outside the school in other ways. Later, the math assignment could encompass a comparative study of the economics of an urban community as compared with a suburban, or urban community in other countries.

Allowing students to compare and analyze a mathematical assignment frees the student to physically move to the corner store. Next a trip to a suburban store would also enhance the child's understanding of different economic systems. The curriculum if it is to remain useful in this program must never reach the stage of self actualization. It must be so decentralized as to reflect the needs of each individual student. To achieve this goal the traditional methods of teaching math, science, language, and the social studies in separate units are reversed. This means that the initial trips to the corner grocery store would include skills in reading, observing product names, writing, social studies and observing differences in individual family buying. More advanced assignments of price fixing and store front economics are developed as students progress in their area of assigned tasks. Each child after being assigned a task is then allowed to select that area that interests him or her most. *What we are doing is reversing the procedure of having students learn one discipline at a time. In the procedure indicated above the discipline merely becomes the skill that the student will need in order to complete his class assignment, in this case, store front economics.* It now becomes the teacher's responsibility to develop within the student those disciplines that need to be strengthened. For example, a student weak in reading should be given tasks that will give him an opportunity to read in order to complete his overall assigned task. This technique eliminates reading as a separate discipline from math or writing. To provide this type of curriculum experience, the planning of curriculum must now become a multi-professional approach of professional, para-professional and community groups.

The involvement of community people in class planning can lend valuable assistance to the classroom teacher in developing the type of learning environment within the classroom that allows gifted as well as all children an opportunity to develop alternative routes to learning. This kind of involvement will allow students the opportunity to investigate mathematics, science, sociology, etc. in an inter-disciplinary approach. This method of teaching must be shared by the classroom teacher by utilizing those community resources available. Community volunteers, often gifted retired people in an urban community, assigned to a gifted student can provide valuable assistance in field trips or independent studies and a continuous intellectual challenge in which the student and the retired individual have similar interests.

Students in primary grades who have demonstrated exceptional talents in one or more areas, should be provided with close support in their choice of new learning experiences. As Piaget refers to the widening of the Schema, primary students admitted to the gifted program should be provided with experiences that will increase their perspective of the world around them. Many deprived students have never ventured outside their communities. It is not uncommon in Connecticut or California to find urban children who have never seen the ocean. Providing the proper combination of the disciplines into the learning experience allows the gifted student an opportunity to develop those skills necessary for investigating and carrying out assigned tasks. *Each individual child finds that in order to improve in his area of interest he must develop basic fundamentals in reading, writing, and arithmetic to achieve his goal.* A good example is a student with exceptional talent in leadership. Developing stimulating experiences and role models for this child in primary grades is crucial. Providing the type of classroom learning environment that will allow the child an opportunity to utilize his or her leadership abilities must be planned by the professional as well as the community. Retired community people who have been active in community affairs could be asked to volunteer one afternoon a week for contact and dialogue with the student. In planning an interdisciplinary approach with the gifted student, planning must be creative enough to focus on developing the affective as well as cognitive domain of leadership. This planning must also develop within the student the knowledge that to become a more effective leader, one must acquire the necessary learning skills. This can be accomplished by assigning the child selected tasks in a leadership role that would require a good deal of reading. If the student's interest is community development, assigned readings on how other communities deal with similar problems will allow the gifted child the opportunity to develop his reading skills in an area that interests him. As a child moves through the primary grades he will broaden his view of the world and his relationship to it.

Later the child, as a result of successful experiences, will develop the ability to critically appraise all values, his own, and others around him. At the late stage of primary development the student begins the first stages of relating his learning experiences to history, social studies, world events, and all other areas of inquiry.

At the junior and senior high level, the curriculum should move to yet another stage of expanding the leadership role. In developing the leadership role the student must now be allowed to assess the nature of his world and behavior with media geared to his particular need. At this stage the student should be allowed to investigate the values of the practical, the realistic, and the real, and to locate his relationship to these phenomena. At this stage the task of overcoming barriers and fears in order to achieve individual success must be an integral part in the planning of experiences for each individual. Tasks that are within the range and expectations of the child will provide valuable early successes in developing the gift of leadership.

Teachers should not be afraid of confrontation of ideas. For confrontation of ideas is the essence of personal growth. With the child in confrontation, the two of you are developing leadership abilities that can be related to political power, for example, and its association with government. This can create in the student the desire to investigate government and man's history of governments in order to prove his point. The quest of power and power factors in play, work, corruption, and other involvements as human beings may be also created. Later, in determining effective leadership in society other related fields could be included broadening the students need to investigate and research his world.

The confrontation in learning could extend to other factors such as role, status, system, culture, etc. With this, the gifted child should begin the early stages of experiences that will answer questions about himself. This stage of development usually begins in high school and early college.

Who am I? What is my relationship to my being? The teacher at this point in developing experiences could effectively utilize drives of identity to not only answer many of the student's problems but enhance the student's learning by having students seek answers to their individual problems in the disciplines of psychology and sociology, etc. Students with money difficulties could be allowed to investigate the interest rates of the loan companies in the immediate area. At the college level gifted students in leadership would have developed a hierarchy of experiences that would have the student highly developed in investigating alternatives, and developing positive and decisive courses of action.

In concluding, I would like to quote Joseph H. Douglass and part of his opening statement at the 1970 White House Conference on children and youth. "A large part of this indictment must be laid squarely at the door of the public education system for the school more than any other agent in our society are invested with the responsibility for the preparation of the young in terms of their coming and functioning ability levels. For example, it is estimated that in this decade some seven point five million youngsters will drop out of school before high school graduation and some 80,000 of the youth who drop out each year have I. Q.'s within the top 25 percent of the population that is 110 or better. In all probability the potential will never be tapped. We both know that no matter how rich in resources any country may be it cannot continue to throw away 25 percent of its most important resource year after year. But I am optimistic for there are strong trends emerging in many districts and schools across this country. It is reinforcing to hear superintendents such as Dr. Marcus Foster of Oakland, California, say that educators must be risk takers. We as teachers will not be able to change the world, but we can make individual changes within our own lives."

I have observed the following positive trends in educational change with school districts nationwide:

1. Redefinition of the range of potential talent and creativity.
2. Emphasis on early identification of talents and on early correction of, or compensation for, pathological conditions.
3. Provision for stimulating environment for infants and young children through child care centers and parent education programs.
4. Maximum reliance on self-placement, self-pacing, and self evaluation.
5. Expanded and revised concepts of "teacher" and "student."
6. Abolition of grade placements as presently conceived.
7. Freedom of entry and re-entry at all ages.
8. Motivation based on interest and appropriate learning experiences rather than extrinsic rewards.
9. Early opportunity to follow special interest and talents combined with early apprenticeship and on-site educational experiences.
10. Change concepts of "passing" and "failing" and of "accelerated" or "retarded."
11. Educational experiences which emphasize the affective and psychomotor domains as well as cognitive learning.
12. Experiences which allow divergent as well as convergent thinking.
13. Sensitivity training beginning in early years and providing variety in means of communication and expression of ideas.
14. Use of systems analysis in plotting and "re-cycling individual student programs."
15. Re-examination of present systems of prerequisites and requirements for study.
16. Use of simulation techniques as well as actual situations to stimulate decision-making and responsibility.
17. Examinations based on performance to establish entry level when necessary.
18. Re-conceptualization of teacher training programs.
19. Maximum involvement of the home.

What is offered here is not a panacea but an oasis, again a process and not a product.

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